

LETTER-DELETIONS: A TYPE COLLECTION

DARRYL FRANCIS

Mitcham, Surrey, England

As most readers will be aware, there are many words which become other words when merely a single letter is deleted. For example, if the first letter of AMORAL is deleted, it becomes MORAL; if the L of MELTED is deleted, it becomes METED; and so on.

In this brief article, I present a list of words, of lengths two to ten letters, where the letter in each successive position in a given-length word can be deleted to leave a new word. If that sounds overly complicated, take a look at the list below; it should soon be quite obvious!

- 2 letters: (P)I, A(N)
- 3 letters: (S)IT, I(T)S, GO(T)
- 4 letters: (B)EAT, D(R)IP, CA(S)T, MAT(E)
- 5 letters: (S)TALE, S(T)ALE, TH(R)EE, BAR(G)E, SPAN(K)
- 6 letters: (M)ETHYL, S(L)IGHT, SP(R)ITE, LOP(P)ED, FAIR(L)Y, QUART(Z)
- 7 letters: (W)INDIGO, T(R)IPPED, MA(T)TING, RAT(T)ING, PICK(L)ED, VIOLE(N)T, RAISIN(G)
- 8 letters: (E)COSTATE, P(L)ASTER, VI(N)OLENT, SNI(P)PING, CONC(L)AVE, CRACK(L)ED, DABBLE(R)S, NEEDLES(S)
- 9 letters: (V)INDICATE, C(A)ERULEAN, UN(D)IVERSE, RET(R)AINED, AMEN(D)ABLE, ERADI(C)ATE, SUBSER(I)ES, SUPERHE(A)T, WAREHOUS(E)
- 10 letters: (O)ESOPHAGUS, H(A)EMATOSIS, CO(M)PATRIOT, TEC(H)NOLOGY, FORE(S)PEAKS, INTER(C)LUDE, UNDERG(R)OWN, QUADRUP(L)ED, INTERBRE(E)D, DEADLINES(S)

A number of the before-and-after words are merely different spellings of each other (for example, (O)ESOPHAGUS). Can you improve on any of these substandard pairs? Some pairs involve closely related pairs (for example, DABBLE(R)S). Can any of these be improved?

What about words of length 11 letters and more? Can complete sets be found — that is, letters in all positions 1 to 11 for eleven-letter words, 1 to 12 for twelve-letter words, and so on?